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WORKING TOGETHER ON SOIL CONSERVATION EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS

A desirable standard of living for the farm family requires adequate income. Good soil care is an important and essential part of the program of sound farming. Only sound farming will produce adequate income and maintain it through the years. But good soil care or soil conservation is a big job on which farmers are constantly in need of information, including, first, convincing evidence that will make them want to use and manage the soil in the right way and, second, the know-how to actually do the job. There is therefore in each county a constant need for an aggressive program of conservation education.

Effective educational work in the broad field of soil conservation involves all agencies interested in and all subject matter related to sound land use programs. Soil conservation includes proper use of the land and management systems that will enable each kind of land to produce to its full potential with adequate protection against soil loss and deterioration. For example, in the case of crop land, soil conservation includes the production of crops best suited to the land, the maintenance of good soil structure, the application of needed soil treatment, provision for adequate drainage, and the use of supporting practices needed for erosion control. Profitable utilization of crops produced as the result of these practices is also essential.

Experience shows that the greatest amount of sound soil conservation has resulted when a thorough program of education and information has been carried out. The best results have been obtained where all agencies concerned with soil conservation, including the Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farm and Home Bureaus, and other farm organizations, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation personnel, Farmers' Home Administration and other credit agencies, soil conservation districts, vocational agriculture departments, elementary schools, businessmen, churches, and other groups have cooperated closely in the educational effort. All should have a chance to help plan and carry out the program.

The farm adviser is the representative of the Cooperative Extension Service, through which educational work, including that in soil conservation, is carried on in the counties. Direction to this work is given through the county extension program planning group. The soil conservation district in each county is engaged specifically in helping farmers prepare and carry out soil conservation plans on their farms and receives technical assistance when needed. Educational activities are needed to make this district program effective. There should therefore be close coordination between the district board of directors and the county extension program planning group in the field of soil conservation education.

Procedure

The farm adviser has the responsibility for seeing that this essential educational program is planned and carried out. To make the program most effective, he should work with all groups interested in the field of soil conservation. As a means toward this end, the following recommendations are made:

1. Prepare a County Soil Conservation Educational Program Regularly. At least once each year the farm adviser shall call a conference of the representatives of agencies and groups indicated above, together with the county extension program planning group and other agricultural leaders. Each of the extension supervisors will be responsible for seeing that this is done in the individual counties under his supervision. This conference will consider the progress being made on soil conservation, evaluate the educational methods now in use, analyze the situation in the county, study the over-all program needs, and plan for further educational effort. The needs of the cooperators in the Farm and Home Development Program should be given careful attention.

On the basis of these findings, the conference will then decide on the educational activities needed during the ensuing period and plan when, where, and how they will be carried out. Assignment of definite responsibility for each part of the program will help to insure performance and avoid misunderstandings.

Details of the finished program and the accompanying calendar of activities can best be worked out by a smaller group, usually representing the extension program planning group and the soil conservation district board. When completed and approved, the program becomes the educational guide for all interested agencies for the period concerned. The activities agreed upon can then be included as the soil conservation section of the county extension program and as the educational section of the soil conservation district work plan.

2. Select Suitable Activities. Educational activities of many kinds may be used to develop the soil conservation program. The needs of the county will determine the ones to be selected. Activities which have proved worth while are:

- a. Information and publicity through newspapers, radio, television, exhibits, and other means.
- b. County and community discussion meetings.
- c. Field days, field meetings, and tours, including air tours.
- d. Demonstrations of practices related to soil conservation. Included may be demonstrations of fertilizer use, crop varieties, and rotations, as well as practices for drainage and erosion control.

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- e. Leader training schools. These schools may be offered as requested for training new soil conservation district directors, farm advisers, vocational agriculture instructors, ASC committeemen, farm equipment dealers, and others.
 - f. Work with neighbor groups of farmers. When located and developed, these groups offer an excellent means for preparing and carrying out farm conservation and farm and home development plans.
 - g. Cooperation with teachers and school officials in encouraging the teaching of soil conservation in elementary schools. Teacher training courses in conservation, teaching aids, and help with tours for classes are some logical activities.
 - h. Cooperation with vocational agriculture teachers. Encourage them to include soil conservation not only in high school courses, but also in adult evening schools.
 - i. Conservation contests and exhibits. Worth-while activities include contests to recognize outstanding conservation farmers, contour plowing contests, land judging contests, and essay, scrapbook, or exhibit contests in the schools.
 - j. Assistance to youth groups. Encourage members of 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and similar organizations to carry out conservation projects.
 - k. Information program for women. Include activities aimed at giving women in general and women landowners and operators in particular needed information on soil conservation.
 - l. Assistance with Agricultural Conservation Program. Help the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee make a wise choice of soil conservation practices to be included in the county docket, emphasize the benefits of the program in educational meetings, and encourage ASC committeemen to use good practices on their own farms.
3. Make Full Use of Available Assistance. Interested agencies, organizations, and individuals can contribute personnel, facilities, finances, and other assistance to make the program a success. Full use should be made of all these resources. During the planning conference, agreement should be reached concerning the part each party can play in carrying out the planned activities.

Definite assistance to the farm adviser is available from the following sources:

- a. Extension Service. Personnel of the Extension Service prepared to help plan and execute the county program are:

- (1) Extension supervisors. These men will be particularly helpful in planning and holding the county planning conference and in completing the program and calendar of activities.
 - (2) Extension specialists. Each specialist, when requested, will advise and assist with specific problems and will emphasize those phases of his subject matter which are pertinent to those problems.
 - (3) Extension soil conservationists. These men, who are primarily specialists in the field of soil conservation education, will be available to assist in planning and holding the county planning conference and in completing the final plan. In addition, they will concern themselves with subject matter in soil conservation and will help with problems of relationships between agencies working in this field. They will also assist extension specialists in adapting their material and methods to the needs of soil conservation districts and other local areas of the state.
- b. Soil Conservation Service. The Soil Conservation Service will assist in conservation educational work at the request of the Extension Service and to the extent of its available resources. Requests for assistance should be considered and arranged for at the program planning conference and included in the program.
- c. Soil Conservation Districts. District directors are expected to assume definite responsibility in planning and conducting the soil conservation educational program in the district. The development of an informed group of local leaders who will participate actively in the educational program should be a major objective of each soil conservation district.

July 8, 1955

/s/ Louis B. Howard

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July 8, 1955

/s/ B. B. Clark

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State Conservationist
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